

Case Study - Godalming Junior School



Project Title:

To promote mental health and wellbeing within the school

The focus of the project as to identify the challenges within a town location school with limited space and how we can promote healthy lifestyles, lower anxiety levels in children and raise the profile of mental health and wellbeing in both staff and pupils.

Healthy Schools Theme:

The themes of the project focussed on mental health and wellbeing, physical health, nutrition and wellbeing. This all encompassed the PSHE curriculum and circle time sessions and also impacted on PTA fund raising for an additional Mindfulness space which was opened during our summer term.

School Context:

Godalming Junior School is a 2 form entry junior school within the heart of Godalming. There are 235 children on roll. 15% of children have SEN, 10% qualify for pupil premium funding and 9% experience English as their additional language. There are currently 4 children with EHCPs and significant learning needs and this number is growing in September as we are gaining 2 more in Year 3 and none leaving from Year 6.

Identified Priority:

It was identified early in my time at the school that there were a number of children who experienced high levels of anxiety. This would manifest itself into ill behaviour from the children as it was felt they felt a little claustrophobic in the school, there were few opportunities to voice their frustrations and concerns and as a result there were a number of children receiving warnings, yellow cards and red cards without the school really identifying the root issue or cause. This led to the introduction of statutory PSHE taking place across the school as a 'protected' subject at the same time and the profile of it raised including class teachers being observed teaching it as part of the whole school appraisal cycle. It also included changes to the Behaviour Policy which changed to the Behaviour and Restorative Justice Policy, the introduction to structured weekly circle time sessions, the introduction of class Worry Eaters, key identified staff identified as the Healthy Schools working party and the introduction of an Inter House event programme to further incentivise the children in school. For the staff there was further release time allocated to value the wellbeing and workload of the staff, work life balance weeks, changes to the Homework Policy to make it more manageable for staff and changes to the expectations in the wider school e.g. staff can share the responsibility of running after/before/during school clubs with a colleague. All these measures were put in place to lower anxiety in children and create a calm atmosphere in the school more conducive to healthy learning.

Outcomes:

The outcomes have meant the staff know that PSHE is a 'protected' subject, taught across the school at the same time followed by circle time sessions at the end of the week to provide 'closure' to issues raised in the Worry Eater and dealt with anonymously and sensitively. There is no longer a 'one size fits all' approach to managing behaviour. We have adopted a restorative approach where all parties are listened to during a restorative meeting, in some cases parents are informed and 'punishments' are negotiated between all parties with the 'victim' suggesting whether 'justice' has been achieved. This may take the form of a handshake, a verbal apology or a written one. This has had a significant impact on the number of warnings, yellow cards and red cards that have been handed out which has dropped significantly (no red cards given out in the last 2 terms).

Staff also feel more appreciated, this is reflected in staff surveys (90% stating they were happy here and would recommend the school as a place to work), low staff turnover and successful recruitment as teachers see the school as a happy, supportive and calm place to work.

Activities / Interventions:

The HT has led staff meetings on wellbeing and also carried out formal observations of PSHE as part of the appraisal cycle. Natasha Brittan was brought in to carry out mindfulness activities with staff, parents and children. The school has held 3 successful healthy weeks this year as part of their 10richment programme focussing on physical health, healthy diet and nutrition and finally mental health and wellbeing. We support Ben Smith and his 401 Foundation and held a fundraiser to raise awareness of mental health charities. We also funded, built and opened our Mindfulness Pod for groups or individuals to visit should they need a 'chill out' space (this was opened by Natasha Brittan. The HT and key worker have attended the mental health and well-being conference and fed back to staff the findings. Other key workers will be working towards the PSHE accreditation with Roehampton University and delivering high quality PSHE across the school next year. We have held varied inclusive 'House' events to 'catch' different children and help them feel part of their house group, further incentivising the children's time here and in a further attempt that GJS offers a genuinely bespoke curriculum ensuring there is a balance between academic progress and developing the children's 'soft skills'. Staff are more skilled at being vigilant to the most vulnerable in the school and intervene earlier and not just when thresholds have been met. This includes providing more structured play and supervision for these children, nurture groups being set up and inclusive activity clubs being introduced so vulnerable groups can partake in physical activity without actually realising they are e.g. Kurling, table tennis, bowling and golf.

Impact:

Over 80% children stated they were proud to be members of the school during our recent pupil survey. Behaviour incidents, as previously mentioned, have fallen significantly. Vulnerable groups are in classes for longer with targeted support. Additional spaces are made available for children to use e.g. the Mindfulness Pod. Visitors regularly comment on the calm atmosphere around the school. Staff feel appreciated and supported and know their wellbeing is held in the highest regard.

In 2016 the staff survey revealed that only 25% felt the school managed behaviour effectively

In 2018 the staff survey revealed that 95% felt the school managed behaviour effectively

In 2016 the pupil survey revealed that 74% were proud to be a member of the school

In 2018 the pupil survey revealed that 81% were proud to be a member of the school

In 2016 the pupil survey revealed that 65% felt safe at school at all times

In 2018 the pupil survey revealed that 94% felt safe at school at all times

In 2016 the pupil survey revealed that 56% felt that behaviour was good at school

In 2018 the pupil survey revealed that 89% felt that behaviour was good at school

In 2016 the pupil survey revealed that 73% trusted the adults in the school and listened to their problems

In 2018 the pupil survey revealed that 95% trusted the adults in the school and listened to their

problems

In 2015-16 academic year there were 9 red cards issued (6 autumn, 1 spring, 2 summer)

In 2016-17 academic year there were 6 red cards issued (1 autumn, 3 spring, 2 summer)

In 2017-18 academic year there have been 2 red cards issued (1 autumn, 1 spring, 0 summer - as yet)

No records before this academic year relating to the teaching of PSHE

This year 2017-18 there is a profile of 100% Good+ teaching (7/7 lessons observed) (4/7 containing outstanding elements)

Next Steps:

To ensure PSHE remains on the school curriculum and is given high status. Staff meeting time dedicated to visiting 'excellent practices in PSHE' and good practice shared. Continue to monitor behaviour and how this correlates with anxieties and vulnerable groups. Gain pupil feedback on the use of the 'Pod' and whether it is accessible to all. Ensure the school continues to champion mental health and promote a calm school where all are welcome and the level of pastoral care is outstanding. Continues to deliver a genuinely bespoke curriculum which serves THIS school and THIS community. Booking has already been made with Mental Health First Aid to book a trainer to lead an inset day to train staff in being Mental Health Champions in the spring term 2019. We will also be offering to run a Schools Direct session on Mental Health and Wellbeing to future trainee teachers and continue to remind members of the governing body that these areas are just as important to get right as the children's academic achievements.

Senior Leader Quote:

"The school is passionate and highly driven to ensure the WHOLE child is nurtured at Godalming Junior School and we have a duty of care to ensure ALL children are made to feel welcome, feel supported and given opportunities to develop and reach their FULL potential" - Adam Samson - Headteacher

Photograph(s):



HT and School Council opening our 'Mindfulness Pod'